

New York Theatre Critics' Reviews 1949

Volume X, Number 23

Rachel W. Coffin, Editor

Week of November 7, 1949

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1949 PRODUCTIONS

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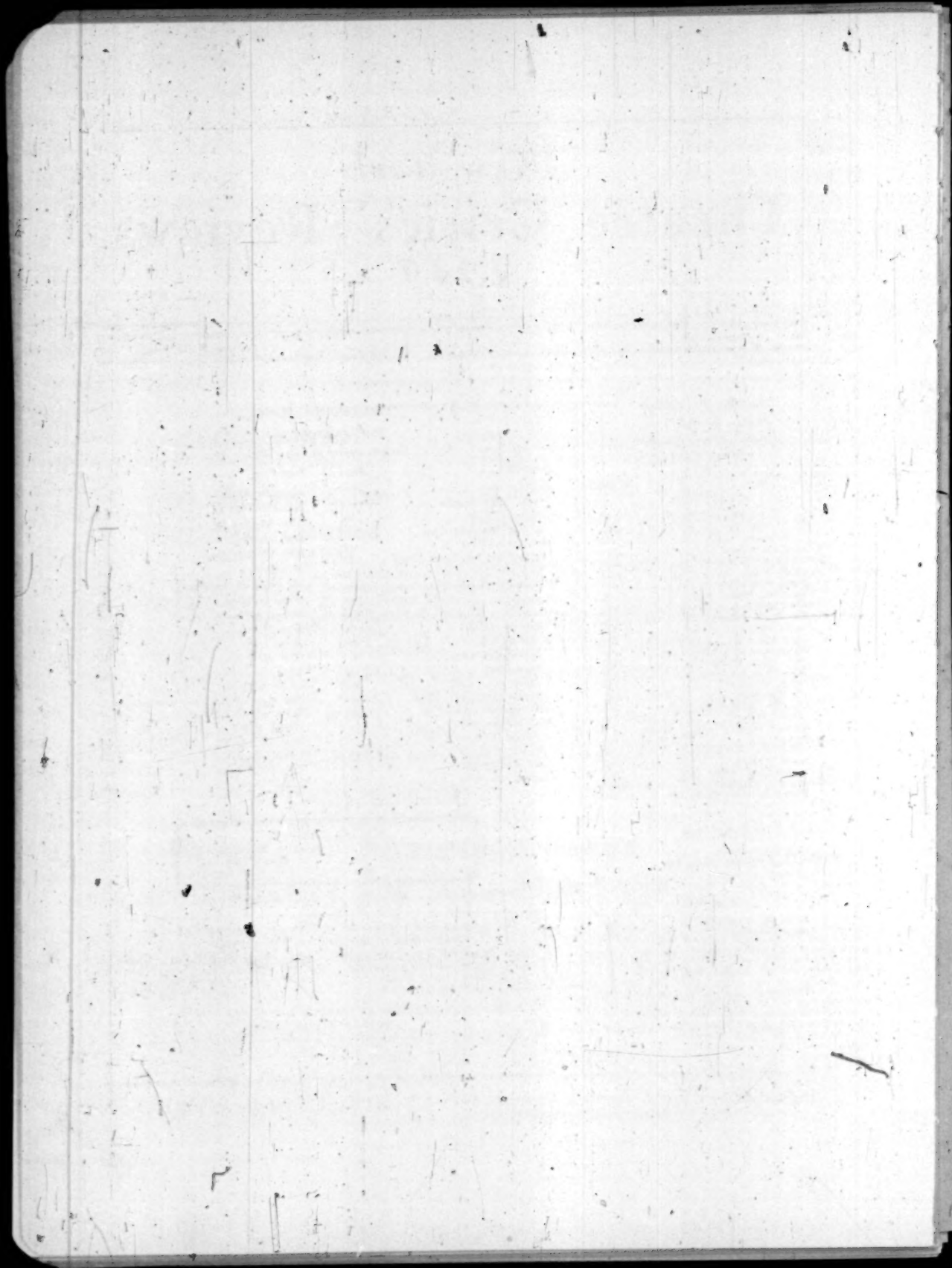
*Asterisks indicate shows scheduled to play week of November 7, 1949

Theatre Critics' Reviews brings you each week the complete reviews as they
originally appeared in these New York newspapers:

NEW YORK JOURNAL-AMERICAN	NEW YORK WORLD-TELEGRAM
NEW YORK POST HOME NEWS	NEW YORK HERALD TRIBUNE
NEW YORK DAILY NEWS	NEW YORK TIMES
NEW YORK MIRROR	NEW YORK SUN

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"I Know My Love"

NEW YORK
Herald Tribune

NOVEMBER 3, 1949

By HOWARD BARNES

Occasion for Rejoicing

THE Lunts are back on Broadway in a delectable play by S. N. Behrman. "I Know My Love" is an occasion for rejoicing. The eloquent dramatist has made an exceedingly free adaptation of Marcel Achard's comedy, "Aupres de Ma Blonde." The great acting couple performs it to the hilt at the Shubert. There is no great substance to the plot, but in the hands of the stars it has a deep fund of quiet humor and feeling as two Back Bay Bostonians recall the vagaries of fifty years of married life. However sheerly theatrical the production may be, it amply warrants the follow-up of the original French title: "qu'il fait bon, fait bon, fait bon."

On the twenty-fifth anniversary of their stage partnership, the gifted artists are celebrating a golden wedding in "I Know My Love." Employing the somewhat hackneyed motion picture device of the flash-back, Behrman discovers them on Commonwealth Avenue in 1939, still staunchly

fighting that battle of marriage which entails so much application, understanding and devotion. With more rhyme than reason he discloses them in 1888, in 1902, at the end of the first world war and in 1920. The structure of the exposition may be slight, but the author has filled it with subtle inflections and singing lines, while the Lunts are downright wonderful in whatever period they appear.

Lynn Fontanne has the chief role in the captivating chronicle and she has never been more artful. As Mrs. Chanler, nee Emily Talbot, she has the problem of switching from an old woman to a young girl who marries an Irish upstart and hews wisely to the adventure. Whether she is standing up for an embattled granddaughter, defying her stuffy father, or holding her man in middle age by the very intensity of her love for him, she is utterly radiant. Alfred Lunt aids and abets her at all times as the fellow who gives up a literary career for the textile business, unfortunately causes his brother's death, goes off to war and is finally extricated from an impossible romance. The two know every trick of stage sorcery. They use them all triumphantly in "I Know My Love."

The Theatre Guild and John C.

"I KNOW MY LOVE"

Play by S. N. Behrman, adapted from "Aupres de Ma Blonde" by Marcel Achard; staged by Alfred Lunt; settings and costumes by Stewart Chanler; presented by the Theatre Guild and John C. Wilson at the Shubert Theatre, November 2, 1949. The cast: Lucy..... Esther Mitchell William... William Le Massena Reilly..... Charles Bowden Frederic Chanler..... Geoffrey Kerr Nicola Ballard, Betty Caulfield Claire Ballard, Katharine Bard Nicholas Ballard..... Thomas Palmer Blanche Chanler... Doreen Lang Eugene Chanler... Allen Martin Katie..... Mary Fickett Louise..... Renee Orsell

Thomas Chanler... Alfred Lunt Emily Chanler... Lynn Fontanne 1st Photographer... Roy Johnson 2nd Photographer... Sandy Campbell Jerome Talbot... Noel Leslie Ames... Lily Kemble-Cooper Fuller... J. P. Wilson Richard Chanler... Henry Barnard Daniel Talbot... Hugh Franklin Eleanor Peabody... Anne Sargent

Synopsis: The entire action takes place in the drawing room of the Chanlers, in an old family mansion on Commonwealth Ave., Boston. Act I: Time: January, 1939. Act II: Scene 1-Christmas, 1888. Scene 2-May, 1902. Act III: Scene 1-July, 1918. Scene 2-December, 1920.

Wilson have mounted the offering munificently. They have selected such excellent players as Katharine Bard, Geoffrey Kerr, Hugh Franklin, Betty Caulfield, Thomas Palmer, Anne Sargent and Henry Barnard to fill in the human background of a dynastic drama. Franklin and Kerr are particularly good in reflecting and enhancing the marital problems with which the Chanlers are faced. Meanwhile

Lunt has directed the work to perfection, even when Behrman has been more intent on graceful prose than dynamic action. And the settings, lighting and costumes by Stewart Chanler bridge the fifty years of "I Know My Love" with extraordinary effect. Here is the theater at its most glamorous and engaging.

Journal American

NOVEMBER 3, 1949

'Yes' is for a Very Fine New Showpiece

By ROBERT GARLAND

Three years ago came the third of May. I wrote a one-word review in the spirit of good mean fun. The theatre was the Cort. The show was "Heads or Tails." The one word was "No."

Today, I would, if I could, turn in another one-word report. This time, in the spirit of good clean seriousness, the one word would be "Yes."

The theatre is now the Shubert. The show is now "I Know My Love." And the "Yes" has now to do with practically everything connected with The New York Theatre Guild-John C. Wilson production co-starring Alfred Lunt and Lynn Fontanne. With the co-stars as co-stars in the first place. Then, with co-star Mr. Lunt as director.

Then one "Yes" after another "Yes" for the large supporting cast, which is actually supporting, for S. N. Behrman's smooth

adaptation of the Marcel Achard "Aupres de Ma Blonde," which has been freely Bostonized, and for Stewart Chanler's atmospheric setting, lighting and costumes, which cleverly cover more than half a century.

These, believe me, add up to a truly memorable evening in the theatre. This is great and glamorous make-believing such as nothing but the theatre can manage to achieve. By comparison, it makes the radio, the television and the pictures that pretend to be plays look like the two-dimensional and pretentious Johnny-Come-Lately-ies they are.

Tears In Its Eyes

Now, with a Boston background, "I Know My Love" is a comedy with tears in its eyes. What is it about? I would say that it is about human relationships, how the re-

lationship of one civilized human being to another is of more importance than anything else in a tried and troubled world.

The relationship of Thomas and Emily Chanler is particular. Man and wife for 50 years when the curtain rises in 1939, you are taken back to 1888 when the comedy actually begins. Then, through 1902, 1918 and 1920, you see how they got to be the ancient man and wife they are. It has not been all easy going.

Surrounding Thomas and Emily are their kinfolks. All the Chanlers of half a Boston century, all the Chanlers of 50 years of living in their family mansion on Commonwealth Ave. Looking back from 1939, when Thomas and Emily are old and understanding, to 1888, when they are not, is "I Know My Love."

There is no story line. No story line is needed. Being about human relationships, you find your interests and excitements in watching the Chanlers—who could readily be you—change, and yet not change, from one generation to another. Even unto the third generation of Thomas and Emily's progeny.

Shine From Within

So shot with greatness are Mr. Lunt and Miss Fontanne that they

give the impression of not acting at all. In "I Know My Love" they are Thomas and Emily Chanler. Their impersonations, unflinching in beauty and believability, shine from within. Not even on their golden wedding anniversary are they wiggly or unreal.

In every way their supporting cast is worthy. I have been told—and on excellent authority—that acting with the Lunts is a privilege, a pleasure and an education. I can well believe it. Now, in "I Know My Love" the team work is unflinching. These Chanlers are related to one another actorially.

I wish, when you are fortunate enough to get into the Shubert, you would accept "I Know My Love" as a theatrical whole, a memorable theatrical whole of which Alfred Lunt and Lynn Fontanne are memorable motivating parts. They, as co-stars and director, set the pattern for its overall perfection.

For this, let it be known, is sheer theatrical enchantment. Warmth is here. And skill. And true love and veneration for what the theatre stands for. And for what its true artisans can be and do when their heads are bright and their hearts are loyal. No wonder this, from first to last, is a one-word "Yes" review!

"I Know My Love"—continued

Daily Mirror

NOVEMBER 3, 1949

Lunts Are Magnificent In 'I Know My Love'

By ROBERT COLEMAN

Those wonderful, wonderful, wonderful Lunts arrived at the Shubert Theatre last evening in "I Know My Love," and playgoing has again become a tremendously stimulating experience. Their current vehicle was adapted by S. N. Behrman from a French script by Marcel Achard, but we suspect it is much more Behrman than Achard. Top shelf Behrman, too.

Behrman at his best is a joy. He writes dialogue that sparkles on the surface and has the bite of a cobra beneath it. It falls easily on the ears, and delights the mind. It is trenchant and illuminating. One of his more memorable lines is an accurate description of Lynn Fontanne. Beautifully read by Alfred Lunt, it says something like this: You can make a crisis with a smile, and a climax with an intonation of the voice.

"I Know My Love" is an ultra-sophisticated twist on "The Late George Apley." It, too, is set in Boston, and has to do with Back Bay Brahmins. Behrman's Brahmins, however, are anything but stuffy. They are volatile, artistic for the most part, and iconoclastic. They accept their destinies only after wrestling with their souls, and some of them aren't content with acceptance.

"I Know My Love" is an episodic play, replete with flash-

backs. It opens at the celebration of the Golden Wedding anniversary of Thomas and Emily Chanler. Their children and grandchildren are present with gifts and speeches. But the happy event is tinged with bitterness. The Chanler children are in revolt against the domineering Thomas.

In subsequent scenes, the reasons for their conduct are made plain. Industrialist Chanler had been a crusading and penniless writer, who sacrificed his craft and some of his philosophy, after marrying a wealthy girl and being forced to assume control of her family's textile mills. He is a vital and aggressive man, with a roving eye. Having made sacrifices himself, he cannot understand, for instance, why his son should be unwilling to do likewise. And he cannot quite understand the resentment of the son for having lost a girl because of parental competition.

But through happiness and heartbreak, Emily Chanler remains loyal to her gifted and somewhat erratic husband. It is she who, with infinite tact and skill, makes their marriage work and holds the affections of her

headstrong and temperamental offspring.

Lunt and Miss Fontanne are magnificent as Thomas and Emily Chanler. Magnificent is the word that comes most readily to mind, but if you, with more time at your command, can dig out a more adequate superlative—then it's applicable to their performances. Here is truly brilliant acting. Here are histrionic portraits to cherish.

Enthusiastic salutes are due Geoffrey Kerr, Betty Caulfield, Katharine Bard, Thomas Palmer, Doreen Lang, Noel Leslie, Lily Kemble-Cooper, Henry Barnard, Hugh Franklin and Anne Sargent. Bows, also, should go to Esther Mitchell, William Le Massena and Allen Marten in lesser roles.

Lunt has directed and Stewart Chaney has set the play with unerring taste and admirable effect.

The Theatre Guild and John C. Wilson have a huge hit on their hands. Remember, we warned you to buy your tickets a week ago. We were right. "I Know My Love" spells "South Pacific," sans music.

The New York Times

NOVEMBER 3, 1949

Alfred Lunt and Lynn Fontanne

Return in S. N. Behrman's

"I Know My Love."

By BROOKS ATKINSON

Although the Lunts are dazzling actors, it is difficult not to look at what they are playing. It is "I Know My Love," which S. N. Behrman has adapted from Marcel Achard's "Auprès de Ma Blonde" and which the Theatre Guild and John C. Wilson brought into the Sam S. Shubert Theatre last evening.

This is the comedy in which the Lunts appear as fabulously old people in the first act, and then begin life over at a tender age in the second act and age by easy stages for the rest of the evening. "Tour de force" is the cultured phrase generally applied to such stage antics.

On the twenty-fifth anniversary of their first appearance as a team in "The Guardsman," the Lunts are superb actors. When Mr. Behrman gives them any stuff to work

with, they irradiate it with their special genius, which has enlivened about every theatregoer in the United States. When the play presents them as a doddering old couple on the occasion of their fiftieth wedding anniversary, a kind of witty electricity passes between them, which is vastly entertaining, and a fiftieth wedding anniversary looks like one of the most enviable occasions in life. This first act is warm and sentimental. Wrinkled, whitened, bent and shaky, the Lunts play it like thoroughbreds. The first act of "I Know My Love" is a gay invitation to the familiar delights of drawing-room comedy acted with style.

But let's face the facts even on the silver anniversary of the Lunts' first appearance as a team. "I Know My Love" abuses the privilege of being light. It has nothing to say and very little to contribute to entertainment. It is the life story of two persons who love each other devotedly but accumulate the usual burden of economic success and the familiar irritations. Since it is written by men it gallantly presents the little lady as the one who understands everything and everyone through intuition and saves the marriage in its thirtieth year by cunning manipulation.

Anything is a good enough subject for drawing-room comedy. But this comedy is untidy in construc-

tion, cluttered with clichés and nomenclatures and deficient in wit. There are a number of scenes in which the Lunts do not appear. That makes for heavy going. As they are volatile and skillful performers, "I Know My Love" recovers remarkably when they return. Mr. Lunt struts and Miss Fontanne looks stily wise—a situation that is gay and shirking in the incomparable Lunt tradition. They have a fond, quizzical scene at the close in their most immaculate style. But to one astonished theatregoer, the gleams of witty acting after the first act do not sufficiently compensate for an increasingly muddled play. Although "O, Mistress Mine" was trivial, it had spirit in it that could be acted. As usual, the production is handsome, with a bright and spacious

setting and vivacious costumes by Stewart Chaney. The cast includes a number of agreeable actors in roles that are about as minor as they can be. In sum, "I Know My Love" has all the visual glitter of a vehicle for the Lunts.

But they are the most accomplished actors in our theatre, able to play fine plays as well as amusing antics. They have played Shakespeare, Shaw and Sherwood. Twenty-five years ago last month they lighted up the town with a matchless comedy by Molnar. Against that illustrious background it is difficult to overlook the inadequacy of "I Know My Love," which is not of their quality.

"BEST PLAYS OF 1948-1949"

Selection of the ten best in the now published 1948-1949 volume of "The Burns Mantle Best Plays of 1948-1949," edited by John Chapman, is:

"Death of a Salesman"
"Anne of the Thousand Days"
"The Madwoman of Chailior"
"Detective Story"
"Edward, My Son"

"Life With Mother"
"Goodbye, My Fancy"
"Light Up the Sky"
"The Silver Whistle"
"Two Blind Mice"

"I Know My Love"—continued

The Sun

NOVEMBER 3, 1949

By WARD MOREHOUSE

Those Magnificent Lunts.

Alfred Lunt, the world's best actor, is again playing love scenes with Mrs. Lunt, the brilliant other half of the theater's first stage team, and Broadway seems a wonderful place once more. They set up shop last night in the Sam S. Shubert Theater with their new comedy, "I Know My Love," and they will be selling out until they get a yearning next June to return to the cornfields of Wisconsin.



finer show.

Alfred Lunt is again mumbling and sputtering, jerking his head and rolling his eyes, as he explosively stalks Miss Fontanne, his prey for all of a quarter of a century, about the drawing

room. She is again gay and winning, taunting and knowing—arch, airy and elusive. Now, as we first see them upon the Shubert stage as the Chanlers, Tom and Emily, in "I Know My Love," they are celebrating their golden

wedding anniversary—silver-haired and a little infirm, but devoted and still planning as they review a half century of the bliss, the discord, the turbulence and the crises of married life.

The flashback device is used to bring the Chanlers back to the Boston that used to be—to all the rigid conventionality of Boston of 1888, when the penniless but ardent young Chanler came awooing on a Christmas day and remained to defy Emily's violent father. "I Know My Love" then brings Tom and Emily on through the years—into 1902, when Emily was bewitching in her pompadour and Tom was coming along in the textile business, his father-in-law's line, and living in his father-in-law's house. Sixteen years later Tom, notwithstanding his age, is off at war, sending his loving letters back to Boston, and in the final scene, in 1920, the wisdom of Emily saves their marriage from disruption.

It's a minor detail, the fact that "I Know My Love" is a loose and rambling play. The Behrman-Achard play is successful as a comedy for the Lunts in that it gives them scenes of warmth and tenderness, scenes of gallantry and graciousness and delightful banter. Why, in the final charm-

ing moments of last night's exorciser, there was that once gawky mule-driver out of Tarkington's "Clarence" making love all over again to the girl who played the harum-scarum wife in "Dulcy," and inviting her to go with him to the mystic ports of the Far East. She went.

Most of the roles of the supporting players in "I Know My Love" are negligible. Geoffrey Kerr does what he can with the part of a rebellious and disloyal son. Anne Sargent has a good scene in the final act, playing the would-be mistress who is disposed of in fine fashion by the all-knowing Emily. Betty Caulfield and Katherine Bard are thoroughly capable, as is Hugh Franklin, who gets something of a characterization into the role of Emily's drinking brother. Stewart Chaney had contributed first-rate settings. His costumes are wonderful.

There is cause for cheering to day. The Lunts are back in town, open for business at the Shuberts' main store, and the famous Alley will be one of the brightest, as well as one of the shortest, of the world's thoroughfares throughout the long winter.

New York Post HOME NEWS

NOVEMBER 3, 1949

The Joy of Seeing The Lunts at Play

By RICHARD WATTS JR.

That happy sense of complete well-being, which is invariably present when the Lunts go into action, was in evidence again at the Shubert Theatre last night. Despite S. N. Behrman's always graceful prose, it cannot be said "I Know My Love," his adaptation of Marcel Achard's "Aupres de Ma Blonde," is a particularly interesting comedy in its own right. It is, indeed, a sprawling and uncertain play. But it has the great merit of providing America's most distinguished acting couple with a proper springboard for their incomparable talents, and the theatre as theatre takes on magic again.

It is one of the most joyful things about the Lunts that they go about everything they do with such frank and unashamed relish. In this serious-minded day, delight in the theatre for its gay theatricality is almost a lost art, but this wonderful pair bring it

back with all its onetime grandeur and glory. They frankly and proudly love acting for their own sake, and it would be a cloddish audience that did not share in their pleasure. Because "I Know My Love" gives them such a comforting opportunity to perform as only they can, there is every reason to hail it with gratitude.

Through the Years

It is frankly a vehicle rather than a play. It permits its stars to start out as two wise and mellow ancients celebrating their golden wedding anniversary in 1939; takes them back to Christ-

mas Day in 1888, when she was the daughter of a stern old-school Bostonian and he was an upstart young newspaperman with a bit of the crusader about him; shows them in 1902 when he was becoming a prosperous business man; lets us see the troubled wife while her husband was away to war in 1918, and leaves them in 1920, when the chastened husband decides not to run away to Paris with a younger woman.

There is certainly nothing profound, dramatic or even particularly persuasive about it, and it does leave some very untraveled ends. There are, for example, a number of problems on the minds of the couple's innumerable descendants in the first act that never come to anything. As a matter of fact, I wasn't always clear as to the identity of some of those descendants. But it doesn't really matter. You watch that husband and wife facing the various problems of their domestic life, and it is so much fun doing so that there isn't time to bother with much else.

The Lunt Glow

The family chronicle is an unashamedly sentimental one, with the wife being wise, tolerant and understanding, and the husband something of a spoiled boy who

is inclined to be rakish in a nice way. What is important is that both Miss Fontanne and Mr. Lunt play every scene and manage each speech and gesture with such ease and brilliance that it is happiness just to watch them. Nor is it merely that they act so expertly. There is a warmth about them, a sense of effortless gaiety, a rich and mellow humanity, which gives their playing a quality that causes the theatre to glow.

There isn't much of a chance for anyone else in the cast, although such pleasant performers as Geoffrey Kerr, Katharine Bard, Betty Caulfield and Hugh Franklin appear as members of the family. As the dashing young poetess who for a moment seems on the verge of stealing Mr. Lunt, the handsome and striking Anne Sargent makes the most interesting impression among the supporting players. But this is a Lunt field-day, and it is the pleasure of watching them at play which makes the sentimental chronicle called "I Know My Love" a real theatrical comfort.

"I Know My Love"—continued

DAILY NEWS

NOVEMBER 3, 1949

Love and xxx's to Lynn Fontanne And Mr. Lunt on Their 25th Ann'y

By JOHN CHAPMAN

Mr. and Mrs. Theatre had an at-home last evening at the Shubert on 44th St. The invitation cards, which had seat numbers and prices marked on them, announced "I Know My Love." It was a delightful party—one of those affairs where a whole big crowd has a grand time and nobody goes home mad.

It should have been a delightful party, too, and nothing should ever have gone wrong with it, for it celebrated the 25th anniversary of Mr. and Mrs. Theatre as an acting team. There could be no better words to describe it than "I Know My Love."

Alfred Lunt and Lynn Fontanne, who have been married for a long spell, must love each other—but this is their own affair and it would not pry into it. What con-

cerns me is that they love audiences—not as selfish hams seeking applause, but as a genuinely unselfish pair who will do all they can to make other people happy.

A Delightful Vehicle.

What the Lunts can do to make others happy is a great deal, for they are actors of charm and wit. They also are extraordinarily shrewd about show business, and any production with which they are associated will not be skimpy in

style or finish. "I Know My Love" is a delightful vehicle for them at this time, and they play it with infectious zest and satisfaction.

The comedy has been rebuilt by S. N. Behrman from a French job by Marcel Achard which was titled "Aupres de Ma Blonde." It is an astute combination of sentiment and sophistication covering 50 years of a couple's married life. It begins by showing Mr. and Mrs. Theatre on their golden anniversary, then flashes back to the beginning and carries them through the fun and troubles and devotion and doubts of the state of wedlock.

It seems to me that this is one of Mr. Behrman's best comedies—witty enough, well-mannered, skillful and sentimentally touching.

The Lunts do not romp and clown through it, as they did in "O, Mistress Mine"; they enjoy every minute of it, of course, but they also bestow upon it a profound and contagious affection. They are wonderful people to be with.

Excellent Production.

The producers, the Theatre Guild and John C. Wilson have offered every assistance. The company is large and charming, with players like Geoffrey Kerr, Betty Caulfield, Katherine Bard, Thomas Palmer, Allen Martin, Mary Fickett and Anne Sargent lending all possible support. Stewart Chaney has built one fine room in a fine Boston house, and has redecorated it every few years to follow the fashions from 1838 to 1938. He also has costumed the ladies and gentlemen most attractively.

Mr. Lunt did the directing. He knows his love, which is the theatre and a theatre's audience. Miss Fontanne knows her love, which is the same. And I know mine: it's Lunt and Fontanne. Particularly Miss Fontanne this time, for she is giving a most artful performance.



New York World-Telegram

NOVEMBER 3, 1949

Lunt and Fontanne Score in Witty Play

By WILLIAM HAWKINS.

It is happy and sentimental and all's-right-with-the-world at the Shubert where Alfred Lunt and Lynn Fontanne are marking their 25th anniversary of acting together in a family chronicle called "I Know My Love."

The meeting of talents involved is extraordinarily sympathetic. This is a discursive play of wit and wisdom, finely tailored to the uses and designs of the beloved acting team. It laughs and cries in their image. It is richly set and dressed, and acted with tone by a first-rate supporting cast. Under Mr. Lunt's guidance it veritably skims.

The first act shows the Chanlers at their 50th wedding anniversary

in '79, and spends its generally good-natured time establishing the family relationships. The couple has a son and daughter, each married and with a child. They are all well off and very Boston. They all have obstinate streaks, and before the act is over the children have drastically defied their father who clearly expresses his willingness to get along without them.

Molded Her Happiness.

This is a key to the whole story, which tells how Emily Chanler, by "the violence of her gentle understanding" molded her own happiness and made herself indispensable to Thomas.

He is egotistic and bad-tem-

pered, and Emily has to be wise for two. From an intolerant young radical he grows into a business success, and we watch the cycle of his intolerance toward his own old artistic leanings in his children.

There is a quantity of story here, deceptive because it is told always with the focus on the older Chanlers. Emily's brother is a charming untalented drunkard, and Thomas' is a romantic fanatic who kills himself, leaving each of them in a guilty shadow.

Saves Reputation.

Their daughter has an illegitimate child, but marries a faithful bore to save her reputation. When their son wants to marry a poetess, the girl comes as close as anybody ever can to defeating Emily.

The crux of the theme is stated when Thomas in exasperation accuses his wife of tiptoeing around in his mind so he cannot talk to another woman without thinking how silly what he says would sound to Emily. To her romance is a commodity and she knows just how to pay for it.

The peak of the story is Emily's exquisite annihilation of Thomas' last romance.

S. N. Behrman has adapted all this from a French play, with wit, pathos and a wisely chosen wealth of conversational clichés, that is

gold-yielding pay dirt for the Lunts. The jokes and many other remarks belong in period, and are employed so deftly, they pique the swift moods of the performance until it is like a stroll through a preposterously enchanting garden of herbs.

Moments of Full Bloom.

There are so many moments of full bloom created by these fine actors that it is difficult to select illustrative scenes.

Unforgettable though is Miss Fontanne's teen-like assertiveness at choosing a mate, the whole heart-breaking letter scene with its foretaste of the older woman in the line "He protests too much," and her brazen impudence as she calls herself a "sentimental old lady" while looking like a sexy spider at the height of her powers.

Lunt's high-pitched explosiveness as a youth is inventive and unique comedy, and just as personalized in his own style as his rages at his wife's good sense, and his ultimate rebellious defeat.

So vivid is the illusion this pair creates that you leave them, apprehensive over their encroaching fragility. Then bow again in their direction and remember that barely a season ago they were roistering around Paris deciding whether or not to get married.

"Regina"

The Sun

NOVEMBER 1, 1949

By WARD MOREHOUSE

Fascinating Experiment.

Lillian Hellman's "The Little Foxes," her withering drama of the covetous Hubbards, gouging out a fortune at the turn of the century, now comes along with a Marc

Blitzstein score, and it loses none of its power. The pioneering Cheryl Crawford never one to depend upon formula in the theater, brought the new production into the super-plush 46th Street playhouse last night.

Blitzstein has woven his music into the fabric of the original play, resorting to snatches of spoken dialogue here and there, and these transitions are always very sharp and timely—and unexpected, too. The composer has gone about his work so deftly, so ingeniously, and has stuck with such tenacity to the Hellman story line, his new "Regina," as the musical drama is now called, marches with relentless impact through its prologue and two acts. The Music Department of this newspaper will report on another

day on the intricacies and the technicalities of the Blitzstein compositions.

Let it be now recorded that "Regina" has been adroitly directed by Robert Lewis, that it is well cast and sung, and that exceptional settings have been provided by Horace Armistead and costumes by Aline Bernstein. Scenes from the play that were so extraordinarily dramatic when it was done without song remain memorable with their new musical trimmings.

Such as the scene when the weak and wretched Birdie, under the influence of elderberry wine, sings out the bitter secrets in

her life and in her heart; such as the scene when the vicious Regina, after bringing on her dying husband's heart attack, stands back as he gropes up the stairway in quest of his medicine. And the interlude in which this same Regina confronts her thieving brothers and reminds them that they will now begin taking orders, her orders.

To Jane Pickens, Georgia-born, falls the role of the demoniacal Regina, created with relish by Tallulah Bankhead some years ago. Miss Pickens is vital and regal; she has power, looks and style and a tigerish walk. She

sings with authority and when she is given a line to speak she snaps it out with all the ferocity of her galvanic predecessor. Her Regina is an all-devouring hellion.

Brenda Lewis is triumphant as the wistful and pathetic Birdie, given to secret drinking to hide her misery and her shame, and in her revelation of her despair she stops the play just as the magnetic Patricia Collinge did in the original production. Priscilla Gillette, for a time the heroine of "Brigadoon," brings a fine voice, an instinct for acting and genuine attractiveness to her playing in the role of the daughter. George Lipton is particularly good as the wily and now vocal brother Ben, and so is David Thomas as the weaker Oscar. The thieving son, Leo, was a scamp and a horror in the original version. Now, in the playing of Russell Nype, he is just as ornery as ever, but he also emerges as something of a low-comic. Perhaps Composer Blitzstein and Director Lewis wanted the part done that way. William Wilderman is thoroughly believable, and admirably vocal, as Regina's stricken husband.

I've always had such consuming respect for "The Little Foxes" as a play that I can take it in blackface, or under canvas, or with an ambitious Blitzstein score, as it is now offered. You may prefer your "Little Foxes" straight, but as "Regina," and in its present form, it is to be recommended as a fascinating experiment.

"REGINA"

Musical drama, written and composed by Marc Blitzstein; based on Lillian Hellman's "The Little Foxes"; staged by Robert Lewis; settings by Horace Armistead; dances by Anna Sokolow; costumes by Aline Bernstein; lighting by Charles Eason; musical director, Maurice Abravanel; presented by Cheryl Crawford in association with Clinton Wilder at the 46th Street Theatre, October 31, 1949. The cast: Addie.....Lillian Brown Cal.....William Warfield Alexandra Giddens.....

Priscilla Gillette Chinkypin.....Philip Hepburn Jast.....William Dillard Angel Band.....Bernard Addison Buster Bailey Rudy Nichols Benny Morton Regina Giddens.....Jane Pickens Birdie Hubbard.....Brenda Lewis Oscar Hubbard.....David Thomas Leo Hubbard.....Russell Nype Marshall.....Donald Clarke Ben Hubbard.....George Lipton Belle.....Claniece Crawford Pianist.....Marion Carley Violinist.....Alfred Bruning Horace Giddens..... William Wilderman Manders.....Lee Sweetland Ethelinda.....Peggy Turnley

New York World-Telegram

NOVEMBER 1, 1949

'Regina' Is Exciting Musical Exposition

By WILLIAM HAWKINS.

About "Regina" it is impossible to be objective and professional. I can only say personally that it is the most exciting musical theater I know since "Rosenkavalier." This new lyric drama headily defies classification. If opera even suggests awkward people, florid vocalizing and clumsy acting, then "Regina" certainly is not opera. But it is a tense taut story, already familiar as Lillian Hellman's "The Little Foxes," released into musical terms in a splendidly rich fabric of sound.

The aural intention of Marc Blitzstein is complex and subtle.

Infinitely realized, it is as if he had never heard of a formula.

Impact Is Expressive.

Instead of writing tunes, the composer has made musical exposition. Sometimes one character speaks an answer to a sung query, or a lyrical phrase may be halted in the middle for a conversational interpolation. This is never erratic, but like the whole work is designed for emphasis and expressive impact.

The Hellman story is tough and dignified melodrama. The avaricious Regina and her brothers

plan to invest in some mills, with Regina claiming the larger interest because the men need her participation. When her husband refuses to join in the business, her nephew steals his bonds. She discovers this, after letting her invalid husband die, and is able to blackmail her brothers over the theft, though we leave her under their suspicion of having made herself a widow.

This is strong stuff, a walking invitation to sonorous bombast which Blitzstein has cannily and tastefully declined. He does not list separate songs, but there are inevitably vocal and instrumental passages so striking as to stand out in memory.

Shocking Impact.

Take the testy rasp of Regina's monotone scolding, the clear virginal air of Alexandra's romantic musing, the drum of Horace's weak heart and the foolish "deedle doodle" of weakling Leo. There is the lovely "Quiet Day" interlude, and the catastrophic lament of Birdie which ends as she tragically hums an old dance melody and hugs a wine decanter.

There is still shocking Hellman theatricality in the moment when Birdie's husband slaps her, and when Regina boasts of her luck

just as Horace's medicine bottle crashes to the floor.

Theatrical counterpoint thickens the dramatic brocade as the Hubbard villainess is bared in front of a sprightly Gallop in the ballroom, or the trumpeting fieldhand mocks the snobbish gossip.

The composer's ingenuity is typified by the scene when Ben is bested by Regina. Instead of losing his temper, he sings the slaver's song of "Greedy Girl," becoming twice as contemptible as bluff could make him.

Chameleone Glimmer.

It is popular to think of this splendid Regina, Jane Pickens, as a night club entertainer, but she never learned to sing like this in a dining room. She is utter mistress of some forbiddingly imperious music.

Miss Pickens wisely plays for a nervous, chameleone glimmer that suits her beauty, and seems more characteristically Southern in its tactics than any sultry menace could have been.

Brenda Lewis is deeply moving and vocally aristocratic as always in the role of Birdie, and Priscilla Gillette is a real find with a springtime voice.

"Regina"—continued

New York Post

HOME NEWS

NOVEMBER 1, 1949

A Musical Version Of 'Little Foxes'

By RICHARD WATTS JR.

The cold and rapacious Hubbards, who composed that sinister family group in Lillian Hellman's brilliant drama, "The Little Foxes," have taken up singing since we saw them last, and now are to be found combining song with their crimes in "Regina," Marc Blitzstein's musical adaptation of Miss Hellman's play, which opened at the Forty-sixth Street Theatre last night. A great deal of skilful, intelligent, imaginative showmanship has gone into the performance, and, although I doubt that a score adds anything emotionally impressive to what was virtual perfection in its own realistic medium, the result is an interesting theatrical experiment.

As a production, "Regina" is entirely admirable. Robert Lewis is a director of unusual taste and skill, and he has staged the work with a fine versatility that com-

bines the arts of music, theatre and the dance in a strikingly integrated whole. Horace Armistead's sets are beautiful and atmospheric, and Aline Bernstein has designed exceptionally lovely and colorful costumes. As for the cast, it has been so ably selected that the players manage to be equally at home singing, acting, and, what is more unexpected in a musical drama, looking their parts.

The Score

I am frankly on more uncertain ground in discussing Mr.

Blitzstein's score, but it struck me as being interesting, effective and in the proper dramatic mood. It seems to me at its best when it is most simple, and the songs of the Hubbards' Negro retainers, the chorus numbers at the Hubbard party, and the music suggesting the hatreds and the evil intentions of the predatory family are particularly good. Mr. Blitzstein's lyrics are simple and colloquial, and, although not especially lyric or imaginative, fit in properly with the story-telling.

All of this makes for valuable theatrical adventurousness, but I am forced to go back to my original impression that the addition of a score brings no important new quality to the original play. "The Little Foxes," as Miss Hellman wrote it, was a tremendously powerful and believable social melodrama, accomplishing what it set out to do with complete success. Within its given realistic limits, it was almost without a flaw, and putting it to music is not unlike the familiar case of painting the lily. I confess that I was happy last night when the Hubbards occasionally went back to talking.

New Dimension

I think there is no doubt that "The Little Foxes" was drama-

tically far more overwhelming than "Regina." The new dimension that Mr. Blitzstein has added to it certainly does not increase its emotional forcefulness or its theatrical stature, and I doubt if the realistic theatre is the best springboard for even so modern a composer as Marc Blitzstein. Nevertheless, in its own right, "Regina" is a striking musical drama, and, if its story is not made more exciting by its music, it continues to be dramatically interesting. And there is much to be said for intelligent adventuring on the stage.

Jane Pickens, like almost every one else in the world, lacks something of Tallulah Bankhead's implacable tragic power, but she is ominous and impressive as the tigerish, merciless Regina. The other Hubbards are well managed by George Lipton, David Thomas and Russell Nype, and Brenda Lewis is properly in character as the unhappy Hubbard wife. The role of the daughter, Alexandra, has been increased in importance, and Priscilla Gillette sings and acts with charm and force. William Wilderman is fine as Regina's husband, and a little Negro boy named Philip Hepburn is a delight. There is much skill in "Regina."

Journal American

NOVEMBER 1, 1949

Grand Grand Opera, An Excellent Show

By ROBERT GARLAND

On Broadway, a "musical drama" is a grand opera to the opening of which the music critics are not usually invited. Later, after the drama critics have had their supposedly important and definitely inexpert say, the Miles Kastendiecks may be requested to attend. They, almost invariably, contradict the Robert Garlands.

Officially, "Regina" is a musical drama. Opening last evening at the 46th Street Theatre to cheers, bravos and actual acclaim, I am glad that I, rather than Mr. Kastendieck, was asked to report on the only good American grand opera to come within my ken. Not only is it "grand" and "opera," it is a good show.

This time, I fancy, Miles Kastendieck will not too cruelly contradict me. Yet before "Regina" opened, I could not imagine why, in the first place, Marc Blitzstein thought it would be worth while to set "The Little

Foxes" to music. Ten years ago, with Tallulah Bankhead as the Dixie Devil of the present title, it was no singing matter.

Now, it is! Now, "Regina" is a real achievement for Mr. Blitzstein of the book, score and orchestration as well as for the cast under Robert Lewis' direction, Maurice Abravanel and his orchestra, Horace Armistead and his settings, Aline Bernstein and her costumes, Anna Sokolow and her dances and Charles Elson and his lighting.

And for Lillian Hellman who, writing "The Little Foxes," wrote more lastingly than she knew.

When words are too melodramatic to be spoken, they are better sung. Thus it is with "The Little Foxes." Without the composer's complementary settings, the nasty Alabama Hubbards are no more than talky pre-Tennessee Williams samples of Southern Discomfort at its most discomforting. Only Regina has character.

Marc Blitzstein now gives char-

acter to all the Hubbard kinfolk. Regina still dominates. She must! But, as composer plus librettist, Mr. Blitzstein rounds out each member of the hateful household of turn-of-the-century carpet-baggers. When singing or speaking against the orchestra, his score provides their third dimension.

The story remains much the same. Regina Hubbard, married to a Giddens, manages by hook, crook and character, to get her family into her hard, hateful hands. There are "the papers," which are bonds, and all the ten-twenty-thirty' horus-pous of the most sere and mellow drama. Including the faithful family retainer.

Yet, when sung and said with the Marc Blitzstein accompaniment, their machine-made machinations are dramatically musical and musically dramatic. "Regina" is in two acts. The second, following a fine and forceful first, is as dramatically arresting as any theatre thing on Broadway. More so than many, believe me!

Making the best of each element at hand, Robert Lewis, as director, keeps the evening on the upbeat.

As that director, Mr. Lewis, who, from "My Heart's in the Highlands" to "Brigadoon," both in New York and London, is an artisan to be admired, has seen to it that "Regina" is, first and last, a good show. Thanks, I would

not be surprised, to him, it is as easy on Broadway, a musical drama to enjoy, a grand opera to approve.

An as-good-as-can-be cast, singing an English that is clearer than if it were spoken, gives an obvious idea of what we miss when, at the Metropolitan and City Center, grand opera is sung in an unfamiliar language. Half the spoken plays on Broadway are no more understandable than "Regina" with its singing.

In that as-good-as-can-be cast, Jane Pickens' Regina, Brenda Lewis' Birdie, David Thomas' Oscar, Priscilla Gillette's Alexandra, Lillian Brown's Addie, William Dillard's Jaz, Philip Hepburn's Chinkypin and William Wilderman's Horace are merely the first that come to mind. I find small reason to pick and choose among them.

During many a year of first-nighting, few first-nights have provided the unlooked-for excitement and satisfaction of last night's first night on 46th Street. Marc Blitzstein's music could be music of character rather than of action. But, to a drama-minded critic, it makes on-stage mountains out of molehills.

"Regina," the "musical drama," is a good enough American grand opera until a better comes along!

"Regina"—continued

NEW YORK
Herald Tribune
NOVEMBER 1, 1949
By HOWARD BARNES

Little Musical Foxes

MARC BLITZSTEIN set himself an audacious task in making over Lillian Hellman's "The Little Foxes" into a music drama, "Regina," at the Forty-sixth Street Theater, has the malevolent Hubbard clan singing and sometimes dancing their way through the baleful scenes which made the original play one of the memorable events of the modern theater when it was presented a decade ago with Tallulah Bankhead as its star. The musical embellishments have not illuminated the Hellman work. At times there is a slight heightening of emotional intensity, particularly in Birdie

Hubbard's desperate soliloquy, sung and acted superbly by Brenda Lewis. On the whole the dramatic impact of a fine tragedy is vitiated in stylized situations and jangling moods.

The composer-librettist-lyricist has adhered fairly closely to "The Little Foxes." Once more the greedy Regina and her evil brothers play a malignant game of wits in Bowden, Alabama, at the turn of the century. But Blitzstein has added symbolic trappings, such as a jazz ensemble called the Angel Band, a tap-dancing Negro boy, a polka and a galop to a lean drama of skulduggery and hatred which merely make one remember how powerful it was without them. Since most of the taut lines of the original are delivered in a curious combination of recitative, straight dialogue, singing and a combination of all three forms, eloquence vanishes along with the compul-

sion of a closely knit plot.

The Blitzstein score is being reviewed in an adjacent column by Virgil Thomson. Suffice it to say here that it is either too strident or too Dixieland to add anything of value to a play of great clarity and power. What is important is that it frequently makes the performers in "Regina" forget that they are involved in a grim and numbing tragedy. Jane Pickens has the Bankhead role and plays it in an almost Mae West fashion, even when she is wishing her sick husband dead, or letting him die. In the same manner George Lipton resorts to strange hurdy-gurdy capers as Ben Hubbard, when the latter is fighting his sister for an ill-gotten fortune, while David Thomas's Oscar is no more than pallid.

Far better is Priscilla Gillette,

who sings and acts with grace and conviction in the role of Regina's daughter. Particularly in the second act does she give considerable poignance to the offering. Russell Nype is fine too as Oscar's stupid, sneak-thief son and William Wilderman is right enough as the doomed husband. It is Miss Lewis, though, as already noted, who recaptures most of the quality of the Hellman play. Here is a performance to remember. Robert Lewis's staging is resourceful, if he is not always quite sure what to do with the Angel Band while Horace Armistead has designed handsome period settings. Anna Sokolow is responsible for the occasional choreography and Aline Bernstein for the striking costumes. Blitzstein has tackled a challenging job of transmutation in "Regina." The result is exceedingly disappointing.

The New York Times

NOVEMBER 1, 1949

AT THE THEATRE

By BROOKS ATKINSON

Marc Blitzstein ought to be well satisfied with the treatment the theatre has given him. In "Regina," which was sung at the Forty-sixth last evening, he has crossed the border-line between popular theatre and modern opera, and the theatre has kept step with him perfectly. Using Lillian Hellman's venomous "The Little Foxes" as his source-book, he has written a sharp-pointed opera about two greedy brothers and their greedy sister who devour each other as they move on towards devouring the earth.

Although it is a point of honor not to call opera "opera" but something less portentous, "Regina" is opera in a modern style written for lovers of music. But under

Robert Lewis' direction, it is staged and acted in the cleanest theatre style inside some dramatically lighted sets by Horace Armistead and with acting costumes by Aline Bernstein.

Opera singers are not supposed to be actors also, but Mr. Blitzstein's are. As the voracious, merciless Regina, Jane Pickens acts and sings with the ferocity of a poisonous snake. Brenda Lewis' pathetically tipping Birdie is a masterpiece of acting and singing. These are the two memorable roles out of Miss Hellman's savage drama. Mr. Blitzstein, Mr. Lewis and the actresses have preserved the vividness of the characterizations.

And so on throughout a singularly alert and flaring performance. The compassionate Negro cook—warm and genuine in Lilly Brown's performance; the two malevolent brothers—perfect in the performing of David Thomas and George Lipton; the tender daughter—sweet, and eloquent in the person of Priscilla Gillette; William Wilderman's ailing Horace Giddens is intelligently played and sung more dynamically than his

heart condition warrants. There is one point in the drama when Mr. Blitzstein comes nearer knocking him off than Regina does. As the stage, this production of "Regina" could hardly be improved upon and must certainly rank with the most enlightened stage performances of operatic works.

In "The Cradle Will Rock" and "No For an Answer" Mr. Blitzstein was writing music on group themes and for choruses. In "Regina" he is dealing with individual characters. With the virtuosity of a born composer and trained musician he has written a tart and astringent score for ferocious characters on the foundation of a stirring orchestration. A few songs and a number of arias rise out of the fierce turbulence of Mr. Blitzstein's chronicle of a cruel family; and there are some jaunty jazz-band serenades and a Negro spiritual or two by way of simple contrast. Even "Street Scene" was not so thoroughly translated into the language of music, for Mr. Blitzstein has written a new work on an old theme.

By inviting the theatre review-

ers to comment on Mr. Blitzstein's opera, Cheryl Crawford, the producer, has asked for theatre judgment. And here a theatre reviewer must ask himself whether Mr. Blitzstein's opera adds to the vitality of one of the theatre's keenest dramas. In this reviewer's opinion it does not. In fact, the language of opera seems cumbersome in comparison with the compact, taut, realistic drama that Herman Shumlin directed with force and clarity a decade ago.

The sharp appeal to the intellect in Mr. Blitzstein's brilliant score is less impassioned than the thunderous appeal to basic emotions in Miss Hellman's more melodramatic version. In sight as well as sound, "Regina" is a remarkable achievement that finds all the theatre's workmen on their mettle—particularly Mr. Lewis, who has mastered a complicated opera and pulled it briskly together on the stage.

But to one theatre-goer of long standing "Regina" has softened a hard play. What Mr. Blitzstein has added to it does not compensate for the loss in force, belligerence and directness.

Daily Mirror

NOVEMBER 1, 1949

'Regina' Is an Arresting Adaptation of 'Foxes'

By ROBERT COLEMAN

Marc Blitzstein's long-awaited musical version of "The Little Foxes" arrived at the 46th Street Theatre last evening under the sponsorship of Cheryl Crawford, with an assist from Clinton Wilder. It is an arresting work, uneven, almost always aggressive, and tremendously disturbing when at its best.

The Blitzstein adaptation of the Lillian Hellman drama is some-

times of operatic calibre. Then it is vastly moving. But every

so often the author-composer weakens the power of his work by introducing extraneous jazz interludes. This was particularly noticeable in the first act as "Regina"—that's the new title—approached a dramatic climax. Instead of increasing the tension, Blitzstein almost destroyed it by interpolating a hot band and a polka dance sequence.

The Blitzstein score has few nuances and few arias to remember. It goes full blast most of the time, putting a terrific strain on the principals' voices. Strings and woodwinds are dominated by brasses and percussion instruments. Seldom does he hear the call of melody.

Miss Crawford and director Robert Lewis have assembled an

outstanding cast to interpret this tragedy inspired by greed. Jane Pickens, from the music halls, gives a vivid performance as the ruthless Regina Giddens, who outsmarts her avaricious brothers at the cost of her husband's life and her daughter's happiness.

Her acting, however, is on the whole better than her singing. Her production seems forced at times, and we suspect that the rigors of the role are going to overtax her vocal chords. David Thomas and George Lipton are excellent as Regina's unscrupulous brothers.

The second act is superior to the first. There are two show-stoppers in it: an impassioned lament, magnificently sung by

"Regina"—continued

Brenda Lewis as the shattered Eirdie, and a gay and lilting number graced by Miss Lewis; William Wilderman, Regina's husband; Priscilla Gillette, her daughter; and Lillian Brown, as Addie, the cook. Wilderman has a fine voice, and we wish that Blitzstein had given him more opportunity to use it.

There were some vocal lapses during the evening, but they

were readily excusable. Even Beethoven never taxed voices more in his "Ninth" than does Blitzstein in "Regina." Chirping Verdi or Puccini should be a breeze for the tenants of the 46th Street Theatre after their current stints.

As to that jazz group, it's called the Angel Band, but it plays with all the abandon of

imps. It's a good combination of its kind, but it does slow up the action. Maurice Abravanel wields a dynamic baton over the pitsters. The settings by Horace Armistead and the costumes by Aline Bernstein are gorgeously atmospheric.

"Regina" has superlative moments. It is one of the most interesting experiments of our time.

It aims well even when it misses. It has so much to recommend it that one can only regret it hasn't enough. Anyway, if we were Miss Crawford and her backers, we should be proud to have produced it—though we think it will bring them honor rather than financial reward.

DAILY NEWS

NOVEMBER 1, 1949

'The Little Foxes' Loses Its 'Wallop' In New Musical Version, 'Regina'

By JOHN CHAPMAN

A great part, but not quite all, of the audience at the 46th St. Theatre last evening cheered the first performance of Marc Blitzstein's musical, "Regina," which Mr. Blitzstein based on Lillian Hellman's "The Little Foxes."

There were shouts of "Bravo!" for such of the principal singers as Jane Pickens and Brenda Lewis. Soon after the curtain went up, in fact, there were shouts of "Bravo!" the moment a singer made an entrance and before the singer had uttered a note. This was a novelty to me, for I had always thought that the heartening Italian yell of acclaim was a reward for something a performer had just accomplished, and not a prize for something he hoped he was about to accomplish. But New York audiences frequently are funny.

Frontground Music.

Now that the first performance

of "Regina" is over, I wish I could ask the printers downstairs to put a "Bravo!" in type for me; but in strictest conscience I can't. Cheryl Crawford, the producer, is a doughty lady who on several occasions has dared to flaunt convention and present musicals which have been different yet delightful. Miss Pickens makes a gorgeous and imperious Regina Giddens. Mr. Blitzstein is an ambitious composer and librettist. I wish I could cheer them all.

Instead, it becomes necessary to observe that most of the time the music and the singing of "Regina"

got in the way of what used to be a good play called "The Little Foxes." Every time the plot got hot somebody would start an aria and when the song was ended the plot would be as cold as a Birdseye lamb chop. As the evening wore on—that is a good phrase; let me repeat it: as the evening wore on, I developed the conviction that Mr. Blitzstein had written frontground music instead of background music, and that this was a mistake.

There is no artistic profit in taking a work out of one medium and putting it into another unless the change is for the better, or unless the change reveals something new and admirable. Maxwell Anderson and Kurt Weill took a novel and made it into a magical musical, "Lost in the Stars." They succeeded in translating one artist's creation into another and equally interest-

ing kind of work.

Play Is Still Best.

Mr. Blitzstein has not made Miss Hellman's play into a valid semi-opera. The only strength of "Regina" is the original strength which was put into "The Little Foxes," and the interesting moments of last night's affair are the ones in which nobody is singing. And when Miss Pickens, in an authentic Dixie dialect, sings, "Ah have only contempt for you!" she is not as dramatically effective as Tallulah Bankhead was when Tallu just snarled the words. Mr. Blitzstein's music does not measure up to the passion of the simple statement.

"Regina" is well and carefully cast and produced. Horace Armistead's setting is moody and handsome and Aline Bernstein's costumes of the year 1900 make me wish I were 49 years younger. Miss Pickens is an able dramatic singer, as well as a lovely one. Priscilla Gillette makes an appealing daughter, and Miss Lewis earns applause as Birdie, the alcoholic aunt. One of the best of the performances is by George Lifton as Brother Ben Hubbard.

I can't remember any of the tunes. Maybe there weren't any.

New York Theatre Critics' Reviews

Subscription orders and reservations are now being taken for the 1950 year, January 1st through December 31st. Place your order now and be sure of your theatre reviews for 1950.

A Valuable and Authoritative Record of
the Contemporary Theatre

"Lost in the Stars"

The New York Times

OCTOBER 31, 1949

'Lost in the Stars,' the Musical Version of Alan Paton's 'Cry, the Beloved Country'

By BROOKS ATKINSON

Out of a memorable novel has come a memorable musical drama. The novel is Alan Paton's "Cry, the Beloved Country." The musical drama is "Lost in the Stars," which Maxwell Anderson and Kurt Weill have written. Under Rouben Mamoulian's direction, it opened at the Music Box last evening.

Brooding on the racial animosities of South Africa, Mr. Paton wrote a compassionate story about two old men—one black, one white—who are drawn into friendship by a grievous tragedy. The black man is a country parson whose simple faith is shaken by the evil in his own family. The white man is a hard British planter who acquires faith through the loss of his son in a murder.

Mr. Paton's novel is an epic in which the currents of racial hatred run deep and strong—so thoroughly a work of literary art that one might well hesitate to try transforming it into the art of the stage. Let it be said at once that Mr. Anderson and Mr. Weill have not transformed it without obvious difficulty. They have to be literal and skimming in the narrative where the novel is alive and rich. There are spots where "Lost in the Stars" is patchy. People who have not fallen under the sublime spell of the novel may not fully appreciate the multitudinous forces that are running headlong

through this tragic story.

But Mr. Anderson has the taste and integrity to know the quality of the material he is working with; and he has managed to get into the theatre the story of the parson whose son murders the white man's son and of the white man who has the manhood to recognize a noble character when he sees one. We will be lucky this season if we have another scene so profoundly moving as the last one in this drama. Being perhaps in a hurry, Mr. Anderson writes a good many of the early scenes sketchily. But when he comes to the overwhelming climax of this terrible tragedy he takes the time and has the words to write a grand and enlightening scene with unadorned beauty.

Although the novel had more detail than Mr. Anderson has space for in the theatre, the novel did not have Mr. Weill's music. And here the theatre has come bearing its most memorable gifts. In the past Mr. Weill has given the theatre some fine scores. But at the moment, which is forty minutes after the final curtain, it is difficult to remember anything out of his portfolio as eloquent as this richly orchestrated singing music. Some of it is as artless as a Broadway song. But most of it is overflowing with the same compassion that Mr. Paton brought to his novel.

Written with theatrical virtuosity, the score serves as a classical chorus, picking up and projecting the significance of the various scenes. Breaking the tragic mood of the drama, there is one light and humorous song, sung with magnetic charm by young Herbert Coleman. But most of it carries throughout the theatre the fears and hatreds, the wildness, the anguish and the heavy spiritual bur-

dens of a big story.

Mr. Mamoulian has directed it like an epic. Without neglecting the dramatic force of the small scenes, he has given the whole work sweep and perspective. "Lost in the Stars" is beautifully sung by a Negro choir led by the rich voice of Frank Roane. As the parson, Todd Duncan sings magnificently and captures in his acting the sincerity of a kindly old man who comes through a terrible ordeal. In the opposite part of the British planter, Leslie Banks plays with deeply felt honesty of character that provides the perfect balance.

The cast is too long, unfortunately, for the proper acknowledgments from this hurried column. But, black and white, it is of a uniform high quality well suited to a notable enterprise. In designing the settings, George Jenkins has caught the grandeur of South African scenery and the scabrous of Johannesburg; and he has also contrived to sketch in skillfully the details of the panorama of scenes.

It would not be impossible to quarrel with some of the hasty treatment the authors have applied to Mr. Paton's perfectly composed novel. Faced with the problem of getting a coherent narrative out of a many-sided story, Mr. Anderson has a heavy touch in some of his scenes. But the theme is a noble one. The music is deep, dramatic and beautiful. And the final scene, which pulls together all the strands of the tragedy, catches a fragment of the immortal truth. Probably, "Cry, the Beloved Country" should not be translated into a drama. But it has been, and into a drama that is illuminating and memorable.

"LOST IN THE STARS"

A musical tragedy, with book by Maxwell Anderson; music by Kurt Weill; based on Alan Paton's novel, "Cry, the Beloved Country"; staged by Rouben Mamoulian; settings by George Jenkins; musical conductor Maurice Levine; costumes by Anna Hill Johnstone; presented by the Playwrights' Company at the Music Box Theatre October 30, 1949. The cast: Leader..... Frank Roane Answerer..... Joseph James Nita..... Elayne Richards Grace Kumalo.....

Gertrude Jeannette Stephen Kumalo..... Todd Duncan The Young Man..... Lavern French The Young Woman..... Mabel Hart James Jarvis..... Leslie Banks Edward Jarvis..... Judson Rees Arthur Jarvis..... John Morley John Kumalo..... Warren Coleman Paulus..... Charles McRae William..... Roy Allen Jared..... William C. Smith Alex..... Herbert Coleman Foreman..... Jerome Shaw Mrs. Mkise..... Gergette Harvey Hlabeni..... William Marshall Eland..... Charles Grunwell Linda..... Shelia Guyse Johannes Pafuri..... Van Prince Matthew Kumalo.....

William Greaves Absalom Kumalo..... Julian Mayfield Rose..... Gloria Smith Irina..... Inez Matthews Policeman..... Robert Byrn White Woman..... Biruta Ramoaka White Man..... Mark Kramer The Guard..... Jerome Shaw Burton..... John W. Stanley The Judge..... Guy Spaul Villager..... Robert McFerrin

Georgette Harvey (who had too little to do), William Greaves, Van Prince, Inez Matthews, Guy Spaul and Herbert Coleman.

Young Master Herbert completely stopped the show with his singing of "Big Mole." We suspect that star Duncan applauded him from the wings as robustly as did the first-nighters out front.

The settings by George Jenkins are magnificent and should win some of the season's prizes or scrolls. They are handsomely complemented by Anna Hill Johnstone's costumes. Mamoulian's ensembles, which cover stage and pit, make skilful use of the backgrounds. And we bow to Maurice Levine's conducting of the Weill music.

Let's call "Lost in the Stars" an artistic, rather than a commercial, achievement. There is much in it to praise, though not, we suspect, quite sufficient to give it wide popularity.

Daily Mirror

OCTOBER 31, 1949

'Lost in Stars' Not Up To Authors' Standards

By ROBERT COLEMAN

"Lost in the Stars," which the Playwrights' Company brought to the Music Box Theatre last evening, is thrilling pictorially and sometimes musically, but it lacks the distinction one expects from the joint efforts of Maxwell Anderson, Kurt Weill and Rouben Mamoulian.

Based on Alan Paton's novel, "Cry, the Beloved Country," the new arrival, like so many predecessors, is not an altogether felicitous translation of the printed page to the stage. Something has been lost en route, because "Lost in the Stars" just does not tug at your emotions as it should.

We admire Maxwell Anderson as a dramatist. He has given us some of our finest plays. But the new occupant of the Music Box is most certainly not off his

top shelf. In an effort to achieve simplicity, Anderson often achieves pretentious simplicity—which isn't the same thing at all.

It seemed to us last evening that "Lost in the Stars" was essentially a dramatic work, and that the Weill musical score and Mamoulian groupings were prone to obstruct its progress and impact. The Weill arrangements are gorgeous, quite often superior to the themes involved. On the

whole, however, his score is not up to the standards he set in "Knickerbocker Holiday" and "Street Scene."

"Lost in the Stars," as those who have read the Paton story know, has to do with racial tensions in South Africa. It shows the misery, hopelessness and vice bred in the slum areas of Johannesburg. It tells of how an earnest and dignified Negro preacher and a proud, aristocratic and wealthy white man come to a common understanding of what racial discrimination can mean, when tragedy strikes both of them.

Todd Duncan, who was so wonderful in "Fargo and Bees" acts and sings the preacher with evocative feeling. Leslie Banks is excellent as the unbending protagonist of white supremacy. There is a beautifully ironic performance by Warren Coleman as the preacher's brother, a shrewd and unscrupulous politician. Julian Mayfield is tensely effective as the repentant murderer, who refuses to lie though it means his death.

Others meriting salutes are

"Lost in the Stars"—continued

Journal **American**

OCTOBER 31, 1949

Ornate

By **ROBERT GARLAND**

Last Summer, on an island in Lake George, Alan Paton's "Cry, the Beloved Country" was a beautiful and simple novel about South Africa and Stephen Kumalo's search for Absalom, his son. Under the tall pines of Sacandaga, I turned back to read parts of it again.

Last night, in a theatre on Manhattan, Alan Paton's beautiful and simple novel became "Lost in the Stars," an ornate and complicated

"musical tragedy" by Maxwell Anderson and Kurt Weill. It is the misadventure of the new arrival is most heartily in need of.

Everybody associated with The Playwright's Company production has made more of "Cry, the Beloved Country," than Alan Paton calls for. At the Music Box, there is too much of words and music, production and direction, scenery and costume. And group singing!

Most of it is good, some of it is excellent. But the beauty and simplicity of "Cry, the Beloved Country" infrequently comes through. Only Todd Duncan, as Stephen Kumalo, seems to sense the novel's artful artlessness.

This Stephen Kumalo, an unfancy Christian fellow, is introduced in "Lost in the Stars" by a

Leader, an Answer, a Singing Ensemble that spills off stage into an Operatic Orchestra, and a choral build-up known as "The Hills of Ixopo." Good stuff, it is all too high and wide and handsome.

So it goes. It goes from Ndolsheni, where is Stephen Kumalo's humble home, to Johannesburg, where Stephen Kumalo's humble son is in trouble. And singers go along, chanting of the train to the city, the sad search for a missing son, a little grey South African house and love for sale.

By the first act's end, Absalom is in jail, the Leader and His Singers are vocal against Wild Justice, Stephen is on his knees praying "O Tixo, Tixo, Help Me," the wandering son is found guilty in

a Johannesburg courtroom, the ensemble is crying the beloved country and a little boy sings solo.

The little boy sings "Big Mole." And he, Herbert Coleman, is wonderful. Three years ago, at the age of seven, he rendered "We Shall Meet to Part, No, Never" in "St. Louis Woman." At the Music Box, he and Todd Duncan outstand.

So much of everything but simplicity has been lavished on "Lost in the Stars" that I am distressed not to be able to go off the deep end-critically about it.

Leslie Banks, after crossing the ocean to take over the James Jarvis role, is, along with the Alan Paton novel, lost in "Lost in the Stars."

NEW YORK
Herald Tribune

OCTOBER 31, 1949

By **HOWARD BARNES**

All-Star Triumph

A SOARING musical tragedy has opened at the Music Box. "Lost in the Stars" has excitement, flavor, heart and a stern authority. Maxwell Anderson has adapted Alan Paton's fine novel, "Cry, the Beloved Country" with immense skill and fidelity. Kurt Weill has composed a beautifully integrated score, which makes dynamic use of both solo and ensemble numbers, while Rosben Mamoulion has staged the offering superbly. Since Todd Duncan, Leslie Banks and their colleagues give every inflection to a work of true dimensions, there is virtually nothing wanting in "Lost in the Stars." It is a harrowing theatrical experience, but one of deep satisfaction.

Anderson faced a stupendous job in translating a tale of Negroes and whites in South Africa to terms of a libretto and lyrics. He has handled it magnificently. Interlarding fragments of straight melodrama and moving drama with songs which continually add to the sense and momentum of the action, he has captured the full essence of the original in striking stage patterns. The singing ensemble acts as a sort of Greek chorus, while individual scenes are spotted rapidly in George Jenkins flexible and imaginative settings. The chief point is that the tragedy of the Negro minister, who discovers that his son has killed the greatest white benefactor of his race, is never lost sight of in the complexities of the mounting. The show moves to its climax inexorably and with a tremendous crescendo.

Duncan was the perfect choice for Stephen Kumalo, the Zulu man of God who typifies the agony of his race. He sings such numbers as "Thousands of Miles," "The

Little Grey House," or "Lost in the Stars" with rich effect, but he is equally splendid in the dramatic passages which lead him from his small village in Ndolsheni to Johannesburg only to find his simple faith shaken to its foundations. His scenes with Banks, who plays James Jarvis, the father of the slain friend of all men with compelling intensity, are electric and terribly touching in the ending. He is equally fine in those with Inez Matthews, the common law wife of his doomed son and with the boy himself, portrayed admirably by Julian Mayfield.

Weill's music is not overly distinguished, but it has some lovely melodies and stirring dirges which are perfectly supplementary to the book. When the chorus, led by Frank Roane, intones "Train to Johannesburg," "Fear" or "Cry the Beloved Country" an engrossing theatrical symphony is performed at the Music Box. Miss Matthews has several fine songs, notably "Stay Well"; little Herbert Cole-

man is enchanting in "The Mole" and there is a hot number in a Shantytown dive called "Who'll Buy," which gives variety to the musical texture.

The supporting players are all so good that it is difficult to give credit to more than a few. Warren Coleman is savagely right as the minister's venal brother who runs a tobacco shop in Johannesburg, William Greaves is fine as a petty thief who involves Absalom Kumalo in a killing and Sheila Guyse is extraordinarily effective as a Negro trollop. That they all participate in "Lost in the Stars" with no confusion is, of course, largely due to Mamoulion's inspired staging. There is rhythm, surging movement and an immaculate pace in this Playwright's Company production. It does great honor to the season.

New York World-Telegram

OCTOBER 31, 1949

'Lost in Stars' Has Zulu Theme

Manslaughter Set to Music Is
Adaptation of Alan Paton Novel

By **WILLIAM HAWKINS**

The musical tragedy "Lost in the Stars" is a lyric adaptation of the extraordinary novel by Alan Paton called "Cry, the Beloved Country."

Mr. Paton's prose has the unusual quality of seeming primary

and ecclesiastical at the same time. A childlike formality of South African Zulu vernacular heightens this impression, and the frequently lovely musical retains the book's reverent innocence.

The book also has a way of leaving readers speechlessly enthusiastic, and not a little of this

devoted awe is evident in the theatrical projection of the story.

Case of Manslaughter.

Racial difficulties in South Africa are probably as severe as they are anywhere in the world. The Zulu lives in poverty in the hills. Or he goes to the city, Johannesburg, and is exploited or learns to lust for luxury, then shortly becomes unprincipled.

Here Absalom, the son of a country preacher, Stephen, falls in with evil friends and in terror

commits manslaughter. His victim is the greatest white champion of the black people, and the son of a wealthy farmer from whose valley lands Absalom has come.

The outward course of the story follows Stephen's search for his son, his defeat at the boy's guilt and his resignation from his pastorate, then finally his new encouragement when the rich farmer turns to him for friendship.

Mr. Paton's story was an uncomplicated one, and Maxwell Anderson has simplified it even further, not always with felicitous results. The mood now is a dreamy one, hypnotic, childlike and melancholy. The problem is big and remote as the stars.

The result is that nothing touches very deeply until late in the play, when the older men finally realize that their tragedies are parallel. The white charac-

"Lost in the Stars"—continued

ters are so thinly drawn that they are barely symbols. In one brief passage Paton made an unforgettable posthumous character of the murdered man, but here he is a self-conscious prig.

Except for certain choral effects, there is next to no impact to the play until the end of the trial,

halfway through the second act. Fear lacks illustration, and murder is only a whiff of violence. Coincidence is more acceptable in print than on the stage, and the ending here seems sick and arbitrary.

Music Is Melancholy.
The music is young and har-

monious, melancholy and none too variable. Todd Duncan sings beautifully as the dignified Stephen and Inez Matthews makes exquisitely limpid sounds. Leslie Banks is stern as the prejudiced landholder and Julian Mayfield plays with troubled dignity as the murderer.

Visually the play is tender, and the Mamoulian direction often gives it bite, though it cannot overcome a basic ethereality of dramatic substance. It is like an accepted invitation to pray over a great evil.

The Sun

OCTOBER 31, 1949

By WARD MOREHOUSE

Beautiful and Enthralling.

Maxwell Anderson and Kurt Weill, aided by the brilliant direction of Rouben Mamoulian, have given the New York stage a beautiful and frequently enthralling musical

tragedy in "Lost in the Stars," put on last night at the Music Box. The Playwrights' Company distinguishes itself with its first production of the season.

"Lost in the Stars" captures a great deal of the poignance of Alan Paton's fine novel, "Cry, the Beloved Country," upon which it is based. It also brings to you the feeling of the immensity of South Africa, that fabulous land of gold reefs and diamond mines, the bush and the veld and modern cities, of great economic problems and the ever-present possibilities of strife between its millions of blacks and its handful of whites. I was in the Union of South Africa last December. "Lost in the Stars" brought me right back to it last night.

Anderson and Weill, with Mamoulian contributing magical supervision and George Jenkins supplying mobile and imaginative scenery, have devised a show that moves along

swiftly. Jenkins's skeletonized settings are particularly effective with the hills of Ixopo and the

skyscrapers of Johannesburg in the background. Anderson has written the play's numerous scenes tautly; Weill's score is impressive, with such numbers as "Train to Johannesburg," "The Little Grey House" and "Thousands of Miles" being outstanding.

The choral work is superb throughout and Mamoulian's stage patterns, his groupings and ensemble effects, bring to mind his notable "Porgy" and his "Porgy and Bess."

"Lost in the Stars" recites its story of the simple Zulu clergyman who goes from his home in the hills to bewildering Johannesburg in the Transvaal, that mighty metropolis of gold-mine dumps and nearly a million people, in quest of his wayward son. The boy participates in a robbery, he kills a white man, the great benefactor of the blacks in the Union. He is tried for murder, confesses his guilt and is sentenced to be hanged. His anguished father and the grieving father of the man he slew, find, in their mutual desolation, friendship, a new faith, and a cause for

living.

The Anderson-Weill work is a play of elemental emotions and it presents fine performances from Todd Duncan and Leslie Banks, coming all the way from Australia and London, respectively, to create their roles. Duncan has dignity, warmth and a positive radiance in his playing as Stephen Kumalo, a good man, and he reaches his greatest eloquence when he is seeking to give up his little church. Banks brings, restraint and sensitivity to his characterization of the forgiving and wretched Jarvis, who finds compassion in his great sorrow.

Julian Mayfield is a convincing Absalom Kumalo. Warren Coleman has a lot of gusto as the parson's realistic brother. Jerome Shaw is excellent; so are George-ette Harvey, Sheila Guyse and Inez Matthews. The costumes of Anna Hill Johnstone are just right.

"Lost in the Stars" is a colorful and soaring musical show. Let's be grateful for it.

DAILY NEWS

OCTOBER 31, 1949

Anderson, Weill, Mamoulian Make 'Lost in the Stars' a Work of Art

By JOHN CHAPMAN

A magnificently pictorial and emotion-stirring theatre piece came to the Music Box last evening when the Playwrights' Company presented "Lost in the Stars," a musical adaption by Maxwell Anderson and Kurt Weill of Alan Paton's novel of South Africa, "Cry, the Beloved Country."

The Playwright's Company has been understandably puzzled as to what to call "Lost in the Stars," for this is a piece which does not fit into an ordinary category. In the program it is called "a Musical Tragedy." After having swallowed the lump in my throat and shaken the last tingle out of my spine, and composed myself for careful statement, I'd call "Lost in the Stars" a work of art.

Here is a production for the musical stage in which all of the complex and cranky elements have been put together in an inspiring manner. A novel has been adapted and has not lost its scope and char-

acter as a piece of fiction. Mr. Anderson's libretto and lyrics are the work of an artist. Mr. Weill's music fits the novel, libretto and lyrics like a true and splendid creation, which it is.

The players and singers, some white but mostly Negro, give true and splendid performances, with Todd Duncan being majestically impressive in the leading role of a sweet and troubled Negro Christian minister among the blacks near Johannesburg.

Remarkable Settings.

George Jenkins, the scene designer, has created settings which

are arrestingly beautiful and enormously flexible. Against two backdrops, one of Johannesburg and the other of the hill country, the places of Mr. Paton's novel appear and disappear with flawless timing and ease. The city backdrop, which was created by Horace Armistead, is one of the most remarkable canvases I have ever seen in a theatre, for it can express many moods under many lights.

And players, singers, story, songs, sets and lights have come together under the direction of Rouben Mamoulian—the Mamoulian who staged "Porgy" and "Porgy and Bess." This time he has not overindulged, as he did with a play last season; he has had enough to do to make things come out even. Finally, with an excellent band of musicians under the direction of Maurice Levine handling Mr. Weill's beats, plaints and melodies, "Lost in the Stars" becomes a

work of theatrical art. It has unity; it seems right—and it has emotional impact.

South African Lullam.

I'll be telling you more when there is more time and space. Enough now to report that the story concerns a black minister in search of his son; his son, a down-under Lillom, is a murderer who is executed. It tells of the sweet gentleness of this religious man and of his unbearable trials; it tells of the misery of the South African natives and of some whites who befriended them.

Mr. Weill's music must be taken as part of the production and not as a set of Tin Pan Alley choruses of 32 bars each. It flows and it talks, but in it should be a hit or two like the title song and one called "Stay Well."

The fine principals also include Leslie Banks, Inez Matthews, Warren Coleman, Julian Mayfield and a remarkable little Negro boy, Herbert Coleman, who lustily sings a remarkable song titled "Big Moie."

This is no song-and-dance show. You'll have to work at it and stay with it to enjoy it—but it will reward you.

"Lost in the Stars"—continued

New York Post

HOME NEWS

OCTOBER 31, 1949

"Lost in the Stars"

The Anderson Version
Of Alan Paton Novel

By RICHARD WATTS JR.

Alan Paton's "Cry, the Beloved Country" was one of the

most beautiful, moving and distinguished novels of recent years, a true modern classic of heart-breaking simplicity. To capture its austere biblical loveliness in a musical drama was a task of heroic proportions, and Maxwell Anderson and Kurt Weill have gone about it heroically.

It is not that Mr. Anderson has fallen into that air of pretentiousness which sometimes tends to overwhelm him. It is merely that when he does try for simplicity, it has a rather unpersuasive quality, and that the eloquence is but

rarely forthcoming. Mr. Weill's music is modest and unobtrusive, but it did not seem to me on first hearing a particularly interesting or distinguished score. Rouben Mamoulian's direction is one of the virtues of the evening, being fluid and imaginative, and George Jenkins' sets are admirably in the proper mood. The production is generally commendable.

Todd Duncan is occasionally a trifle suave and glib for so simple a man of faith, but he is excellent in his emotional scenes and, of course, sings splendidly.

That fine actor, Leslie Banks, is, as usual, first-rate as the stern father of the murdered white man, and Julian Mayfield is quietly moving as the wayward son. A boy named Herbert Coleman is delightful as the minister's grandson, and the lovely Shelia Guysse has only too small a role as a night-club singer. There is, indeed, very little lacking in "Lost in the Stars" save inspiration.

"Montserrat"

Herald Tribune

OCTOBER 31, 1949

By HOWARD BARNES

Brilliant Adaptation

LILLIAN HELLMAN has written a brilliant adaptation of a French drama which tries to decode the imponderables of the present day in terms of an 1812 revolution. "Montserrat," at the Fulton, is a valiant attempt to show the cleavage between men of good will and their enemies. In this instance such able players as Emyln Williams, Julie Harris, William Redfield and John Abbott project a series of melodramatic vignettes which never achieve the eminence of tragedy. In a curious manner, however, this Kermit Bloomgarden-Gilbert Miller production has emotional power.

Emmanuel Robles, who wrote the original play, has examined various characters in Valencia, Venezuela, during the Spanish occupation. One is a sadistic colonel, who is intent upon capturing the rebel leader Bolivar, even at the expense of killing six innocent persons. Pitted against him is Montserrat, himself a self-con-

fessed traitor, who refuses to divulge the hiding place of the liberator, although one hostage after another pleads with him for a chance to live. Obviously, the work is conversational and repetitious. To the great credit of Miss Hellman, she has made it frequently eloquent in her translation and remarkably full of action in her staging.

What she, or more properly Robles, has failed to do is to give the offering coherent dramatic unity. The hostages who confront Montserrat are rounded up at random from a city square. Several of them take on considerable dimensions as they face an almost certain death, particularly an actor, a wood carver, a wealthy merchant and one of Bolivar's female followers. There are scenes of flaring intensity in the drama, but they are tinged with grand guignol and are never resolved in the catharsis which must attend true tragedy.

Williams has the leading part as the butcher who is seeking revenge for tortures inflicted upon him during the occupation. He plays it in a bravura style, keeping the action taut when it threatens to scatter all over the stage. Redfield is far less successful in

Play by Lillian Hellman; adapted from the French of Emmanuel Robles; staged by Miss Hellman; setting by Howard Bay; costumes by Irene Sharaff; presented by Kermit Bloomgarden and Gilbert Miller at the Fulton Theatre, October 29, 1949.
The cast:
Zavala.....Richard Malek
Antonanzas.....Nehemiah Persoff
Soldier.....Stefan Gierasch
Montserrat.....William Redfield
Morales.....Gregory Morton
Isquredo.....Emlyn Williams
Father Coronil.....
Francis Compton

Salas Ina.....Reinhold Schunzel
Luhau.....William Hansen
Matilde.....Vivian Nathan
Juan Salcedo Alvarez.....
John Abbott
Felisa.....Julie Harris
Ricardo.....George Bartenieff
Monk.....Edward Grogg
Monk.....Kurt Kasznay
Soldier.....Robert Crawley
Lieutenant.....Stephen Lawrence

Synopsis: The Scene: The outer room of the General's Palace during the Spanish Occupation of Valencia, Venezuela. The year is 1812.



the title role, but he is forced to sit through most of the proceedings with head in hands stubbornly refusing to save the hostages from a firing squad. Abbott has a fine bit as the doomed actor and Reinhold Schunzel is properly craven as the merchant. Miss Harris is fiery as the patriot;

William Hansen is good as the wood carver and Francis Compton does what he can with the awkward part of a priest. Howard Bay's setting is striking, but it is the background for spasmodic melodrama rather than a play of consequence.

DAILY NEWS

OCTOBER 31, 1949

"Montserrat" a Brutal Melodrama

By JOHN CHAPMAN

Lillian Hellman, the most uncompromising and hardest-headed of women dramatists, has found a play to her liking—and mine—in "Montserrat."

Miss Hellman is a specialist in melodrama and a connoisseur of the evil which makes good melodrama. Some times she overdoes her horrific scenes; for instance, I

thought her sequel to "The Little Foxes" was quaintly funny when it was intended to be anything but. But not this time; the new drama is all guts and drive.

In "Montserrat," a French play by Emmanuel Robles—a 35-year-old native of Oran, Algeria—she has discovered the thing she can work on best. It is baleful, rebellious and suspenseful. Its demand upon the audience's reserves of

pity and anger is so insistent that in comparison "Death of a Salesman" is recalled as a jolly prank. It is a strong play, and once seen cannot easily be forgotten.

Cross-Section Drama.

The production is an admirable one, with a splendid, malevolent performance by Emyln Williams, a very moving one in a difficult role by William Redfield, and satisfac-

tory playing by a generally well selected supporting company. Howard Bay's setting of a room in a Venezuelan palace is a fine, integral part of the drama.

"Montserrat" is a formula play—but aren't they all? This one is what Hollywood calls the cross-section treatment of putting various human beings in a spot and seeing how differently they will react. It has a theoretical weakness, in that it puts them on the spot and tests their reactions in Act I and then does it all over again, in closer detail, in Act II; but Act II is one of such horror and pity that it is a dramatic necessity.

The story is of the pursuit of Simon Bolivar, the fabulous, swash-buckling aristocrat who delivered Venezuela, Panama, Peru, Ecuador,

"Montserrat"—continued

Bolivia and Colombia from Spanish rule. The pursuers are the Spanish Army, as personified by the officer named Isquredo (Mr. Williams).

Bolivar, in this year of 1812, has had warning in time to elude capture, and Isquredo knows there is a traitor among his officers—*one* Montserrat (Mr. Redfield). This seemingly soft young man, of noble and royal connections, burns with the zeal of Bolivar, the Liberator. He will not reveal the hiding place of the rebel chief.

Six Innocent Souls.

Isquredo orders six people brought in at random from the street. A wealthy merchant, a touring ham actor, a peasant boy, a peasant girl, a mother of two babies and a lowly born but artistically inspired woodcarver. He informs them that, if they cannot persuade Montserrat to reveal his secret, they will be shot in one hour from now.

And they are shot. Who goes next and how he goes makes for intense suspense. Their fears, their cringing, their nobility and their innocence make for Montserrat a torture infinitely more exquisite than the physical cruelties of the Inquisition. At one moment he almost breaks—but is strengthened by the peasant girl's belief in the rebellion. The implacable Isquredo meets a spiritual defeat.

Williams is superbly cold, cynical and precise as the butcher.

Redfield, who must be in mental anguish throughout the play, manages his work with restraint. Among other good performances are those of Julie Harris, Reinhold Schunzel (whose Austrian accent is out of place, but whose value to his role is undeniable), John Abbott, William Hansen, Vivian Nathan, Francis Compton and Nehemiah Persoff.

"Montserrat" is a brutal and rebellious drama.

The Sun

OCTOBER 31, 1949

By WARD MOREHOUSE

'MONTSERRAT' DISAPPOINTS

Lillian Hellman has crowded a lot of theater into her grim and harrowing "Montserrat," and it is well played by an excellent cast, but it is not a drama of sustained impact. The sheer violence of a series of executions takes on a repetitious pattern, not relieved by the varying reactions of six victims of a firing squad. The first performance was given Saturday evening at the Fulton.

"Montserrat," adapted from the French of Emmanuel Robbes, is a study of tyranny versus idealism, the story of insurrection in Venezuela in 1812, when Bolivar, patriot and liberator, was leading his followers in a fight for freedom from the rule of Spain. A traitor to the crown, young Captain Montserrat is ready to pay with his own life for his beliefs and his treason. But he is trapped by a crafty Colonel into

being responsible for the horrifying slaughter of six innocent persons.

Bolivar, as "Montserrat" begins, has eluded his Spanish pursuers. Only Captain Montserrat, who aided him in his escape and who acknowledges the treasonable act, knows his hiding place. The inexorable Colonel in command of the occupying Spanish Army orders six hostages taken from the town square of Valencia. Protesting and bewildered, four men and two women are marched in. The Colonel makes his decision. They will all be shot within an hour unless they can make Montserrat reveal the whereabouts of Bolivar. That is all.

The agonized Montserrat remains unyielding as the terrified six plead for their lives. When the hour is up the executions begin. The wealthy merchant of the lot degrades himself in the face of death, to the supreme disgust of the Colonel. The woodcarver whines for his right to life. The actor, a strolling player from the streets of Spain, who has appeared before Her Majesty the

Queen, cringes with fear. The wary Colonel, expecting a breakdown from Montserrat, almost wins. The Captain is about to reveal his secret when the executions are half done, but the young girl patriot, one of the hostages, pleads with him to keep it. She goes bravely to her own death. Finally, there comes the news that Bolivar has fled to safety. Montserrat, the exultant martyr, is dragged out and shot.

"Montserrat" for all of the excitement that it frequently creates, is more or less a play of one central situation, a drama lacking in variety as it goes along. Notwithstanding all of the gunfire and the violence and the philosophy, monotony frequently creeps in. It's a play in which the expression of the points of view of the two principal characters, the Colonel and the young Captain, which comes about in a closing scene, provides more emotional impact than was to be found in moments when tortured townspeople were about to march off, to be taken off, to their doom.

The vital character in the drama that Miss Hellman has

devised from the Parisian original is that of the commanding Colonel—cold, cynical, unemotional, professional, fascinatingly played by that fine actor, Emlyn Williams. William Redfield is first-rate in his projection of the weaknesses, along with the resolution and the strength, in the young traitor, Montserrat. Reinhold Schunzel gives a picturesque performance as the cowardly and contemptible merchant. John Abbott vividly portrays a benumbed actor striving for a heroic posture in the final moment of his life. There are good performances from William Hansen, Julie Harris, Francis Compton and Vivian Nathan.

Lillian Hellman, one of the ablest writers that our theater has developed in twenty years, directed this new play, staged within Howard Bay's stark and realistic interior. Kermit Bloomgarden and Gilbert Miller have given "Montserrat" a good production. But, for all of that, it remains, for me, a sharply disappointing venture of the early season.



New York World-Telegram

OCTOBER 31, 1949

'Montserrat' Hits Like 'Quake'

Hideous Tension In Hellman Play

By WILLIAM HAWKINS.

The provocative "Montserrat," with its diametric conflict, is a theatrical experience not easy to forget. This is a peculiar play, so shattering that it escapes pure sensationalism only by the suffocating tension of Lillian Hellman's direction of her own adaptation from the French.

Where most emotional dramas flood and ebb along the surface of variable shores, "Montserrat," with its single situation, is like a bottomless water hole heaved by an earthquake.

In 1812 Venezuela, the conquering Spanish seek Bolivar, a power-

ful enemy of their reign. Unraveling a subtle general, the commanding Isquredo learns that Montserrat, a younger officer, has aided Bolivar to escape. Partly because he doubts that Montserrat can be pressed to reveal the hiding place, and partly because of his sadistic nature, Isquredo picks at random of the street six people whom he will shoot unless they can make Montserrat give up Bolivar.

Innocent Executed.

As the innocent are individually degraded then executed, the struggle between the two Spanish officers achieves hideous tension, and the youth on trial holds out only through the encouragement of a young girl, one of the victims.

The fact that none of the innocent people involved in this

contest has any fascinating complexities, places ethics above personal values. The old questions arise of when the end justifies the means, and when heroism becomes fanaticism. To answer them here, one must know something of Bolivar and what he later accomplished.

Theatrically speaking, though, there comes a time when purposes and morals pale before the sheer force of the situation for its own sake, and its deliberate extension.

Miss Hellman's direction accumulates magnificent grotesque power. So underlining is its impact, that eventually she is in the peculiar position of emotionally crucifying her audience while she racks her protagonist of the title.

It may well be that, for you, the moment will never be reached. But, if you should catch yourself wondering why three, four or five victims would not have proven the point as well as six, the time has come when the righter the play's progress is, the more unbearable it becomes to watch.

One You Won't Forget.

Whatever your saturation point, you will not forget this play. Saturday night after a dozen curtain calls, nearly all the audience sat and continued clapping.

Emlyn Williams expertly dominates the play as Isquredo, fanatically embittered since his humiliating defeat by Bolivar's men. Suave and soft spoken, he is entirely implacable. William Redfield does remarkably in the strangely constructed role of Montserrat. What the actor suggests of youth and dedication is vital, because nothing is written in the part to establish the stature his actions require.

Julie Harris, Reinhold Schunzel, William Hansen and John Abbott are striking victims, and Francis Compton is effective as an evasive priest. But the impact here comes not from parts but from the whole.

"Montserrat"—continued

Journal  American

OCTOBER 31, 1949

Grim

By ROBERT GARLAND

Grim and, whether or not you like it, fascinating is Lillian Hellman's adaptation of the Emmanuel Robles melodrama, "Montserrat." Kermit Bloomgarden with, of all Broadwayites, Gilbert Miller, has installed it at the Fulton. There, in a starless ensemble, Emyln Williams is most effective.

There is no way of telling how closely, on 46th Street, the American adaptation follows the French original. But you are well aware that, as the adapter, the name of Lillian Hellman

everywhere takes precedence over that of Emmanuel Robles, who wrote it in the first place. By birth, M. Robles is Algerian.

He also is a soldier, a novelist, a war correspondent and a playwright. Miss Hellman is, for the most part, the last named. But not, where "Montserrat" is concerned, a great one for adaptations. There is more at the Fulton than meets ear and eye.

Yet what is there is grim and, as I have insisted, fascinating. But, with the original material at hand, it could, it should, have been grimmer and more fascinating. Both as the adapter and the director of her adaptation, Lillian Hellman would seem to have let Emmanuel Robles down.

Now, with Miss Hellman's name all over it, you might know that "Montserrat" is a melodrama with a message beneath

its grimness and fascination. The message concerns real, rather than make-believe liberty.

The country is Venezuela. The city is Valencia. The year is 1818. The time is the Spanish occupation. The scene is the occupying general's palace. Montserrat, of the occupation, is a liberal. So liberal is he that, conspiring with the enemy's Bolivar, he is also a traitor.

So, to get Bolivar's plans and whereabouts out of him, his superior officer, Izquierdo, selects six bystanders from the public square. These innocents will be shot if Montserrat does not give in. They are shot, too. One by one until the final pair.

These, condemned by Izquierdo, as underplayed by Emyln Williams, in an effort to get information out of the Montserrat,

who is never quite believable as acted by William Redfield, die off-stage throughout the final scenes, while Francis Compton's Father Ceronil does nothing.

The others sound off unevenly before their final exits. The best are John Abbott as an actor, Julie Harris as a peasant, Reinhold Schunzel as a merchant and especially William Hansen as a wood-carver. But even their agonies wear thin before the last two are slaughtered.

There is nothing but praise for the setting by Howard Bay and the costumes of Irene Sharaff which glow against it. But, at the Fulton, you are sure that there is more to Emmanuel Robles' "Montserrat" than Lillian Hellman, as adapter and director, gets out of it. Nevertheless, it is fascinating.

The New York Times

OCTOBER 31, 1949

'Montserrat' Adapted From the French of Emmanuel Robles by Lillian Hellman

By BROOKS ATKINSON

In view of the harrowing theme it has to unfold, "Montserrat" ought to be completely devastating in the theatre. As put on at the Fulton on Saturday evening, the effects it achieves are mechanical. This is the French drama by Emmanuel Robles that Lillian Hellman has adapted and directed. Emyln Williams has come over from England to play the part of a nerveless Spanish military officer who tests the steel of a revolution. The situation is simple. Montserrat, of the Spanish Occupation

Army in Venezuela in 1812, knows where Bolivar is hiding. Since Montserrat believes in freedom, he refuses to betray Bolivar's hiding place to Izquierdo, who is trying to stamp out the revolution. Izquierdo picks six innocent citizens off the streets and proposes to shoot them one by one unless they can persuade Montserrat within an hour to tell him where Bolivar is hiding.

Obviously, this is an agonizing situation for the audience as well as the six innocents who are about to be slaughtered. As the cold-minded Izquierdo, Mr. Williams gives a perfect performance of rigid fury, contempt and decision. Suiiting his style to the drama, he scrupulously underplays the part of a monster—his manners impeccable and his nerves almost, though not quite, under inhuman control. In the circumstances the grim ritual of selecting victims, listening to their last words and

piling one awful murder on top of another is calculated to make a theatregoer's blood run cold and to make him grateful that the shooting is done off-stage.

But the murders are wanton, not only in the play but in the theatre. When all is said and done, the carnage is gratuitous. For nothing in the first act of "Montserrat" succeeds in establishing the spiritual importance of the revolution, which is the one thing that might give significance to the killing. The writing is barren. The characters in the first act are thin and casual. By refraining, perhaps deliberately, from heroic speeches in the preliminary scenes, M. Robles and Miss Hellman have left the murders without motivation.

Miss Hellman's direction is on the monotonous side, also. Although Mr. Williams creates a tangible character, none of the other actors do. As Montserrat, William Redfield is more dis-

tingued than passionate. He is a pleasant and intelligent young actor, but he lacks the force for this rebellious character. There are a number of agreeable performances in the drama—Francis Compton, as a bloodless priest; Gregory Morant, as a punctilious officer; Reinhold Schunzel, William Hansen, Vivian Nathan, John Abbott, Julie Harris and George Bartenieff as victims of the infamous murder plot.

Howard Bay has provided an interesting setting, and Irene Sharaff has supplied suitable theatrical costumes. But despite the painful moments of several scenes in the last act, "Montserrat" is not so impressive as presumably the authors intended it to be. It does not prove that freedom and Bolivar are worth the murder of six innocent citizens and the death of a traitor to the crown of Spain. The horror it contrives is mechanical.

Daily Mirror

OCTOBER 30, 1949

'Montserrat' Well Acted But Script Is Bumpy

By ROBERT COLEMAN

Lillian Hellman's adaptation from the French of Emmanuel Robles' "Montserrat" arrived at the Fulton Theatre last evening under the sponsorship of Kermit Bloomgarden and Gilbert Miller. We found the two-act script uneven and insufficiently motivated. Between its dramatic peaks lie some valleys of stereotyped verbosity.

The Hellman-Robles Montserrat is an idealistic young Spanish officer who befriends Bolivar, the South American liberator, and was shot as a traitor. But not before a cruel, ruthless and vengeful superior had tortured and killed six innocent people in an effort to force Montserrat to

betray Bolivar's hiding place.

We should have liked to know more about Montserrat's reasons for embracing the cause of Bolivar, and Miss Hellman certainly had time at her disposal last evening in which to have revealed him more thoughtfully and con-

vincingly. The running time of the play, with one lengthy intermission, is only about two hours.

The characters sacrificed in vain to achieve an acting four de force are quite predictable and rather stocky. Though they were well played by Reinhold Schunzel, William Hansen, Vivian Nathan, John Abbott, Julie Harris and George Bartenieff, under Miss Hellman's capable direction, they remain, for us, types or ideas rather than people.

Dominating the stage throughout most of the evening was Emyln Williams as the iniquitous Izquierdo. He achieved amazing emotional impact with admirable restraint. We thought William Redfield a little too weak as the tormented Montserrat. This was due, in part, to what appeared to be a bad throat. We should like to see him again before passing final judgment.

The setting by Howard Bay and the costumes by Irene Shar-

aff are pictorially effective.

"Montserrat" could have been a moving and absorbing play. The outlines are there for a gripping drama. But, in performance it comes across the footlights too often as obvious melodrama. There is genuine emotional dynamite in the conception, but it explodes disappointingly with a mild ping.

People in the plight of the six Venezuelan innocents should put lumps in your throats, but they seldom do at the Fulton. An enlightened idealist willing to undergo torture for his beliefs should stir your sympathy and respect, but somehow Montserrat failed to do so.

It is the dastardly Izquierdo who fascinates you, as impersonated by Williams. You want to root for the hero and find yourself impressed by the villain.

New York Post HOME NEWS

OCTOBER 31, 1949

'Montserrat,' Tragic Play

By RICHARD WATTS JR.

Being a playwright of great moral earnestness, Lillian Hellman was naturally interested in Emmanuel Robles' "Montserrat," a drama about a terrible spiritual dilemma, which has had vast success in France and a number of other foreign lands, including Israel. The result was the first stage adaptation she has ever made of another's work, and it was presented Saturday night at the Fulton Theatre, with Emlyn Williams giving a stunning performance in one of its leading roles. A play of striking philosophical interest, it is oddly less powerful in its emotional impact than its deeply tragic theme would have suggested, and its strength is curiously hampered by a monotony that has crept into it.

Unquestionably it is a drama possessing an idealism and a moral fibre that are not often to be

encountered on the American stage, and there is no doubt something lacking in us which keeps these qualities from more than atoning for what we look on as theatrical lapses. In less fortunate lands, where the terrifying dilemma that is its theme faced whole nations in the days of their subjugation to the Nazis, the play clearly possessed an immediacy of interest that we have happily never had to encounter.

Moral Query

For the problem of "Montserrat" has basically contemporary

significance, even though its scene is Venezuela of the early Nineteenth Century and the fight against tyranny it depicts is that of Bolivar and his South American patriots to overthrow the domination of monarchical Spain.

To answer its query, the play presents the case of a young Spanish soldier named Montserrat, who has been won over to the patriot cause of Bolivar and knows where the great Liberator is hiding from his foes. A sardonic officer realizes that Montserrat would willingly undergo torture and death rather than reveal his secret but he thinks he knows the idealist's weakness. So he has six innocent people seized from the streets and he proposes to shoot them one by one if Montserrat will not tell him where Bolivar is concealed. The young man must stand there and sacrifice harmless men, women and children.

"Montserrat" is thus a play of one situation, but it is a situation filled with such pity and terror that its emotional power over an audience should be something prodigious. Clearly that was the effect it has had in such varying cities as Paris, Tel Aviv, Prague, Rotterdam and Munich.

But here, despite Miss Hellman's careful adaptation, it seems intellectually arresting, but rarely is it deeply moving. The horror over the shooting of the six victims becomes a kind of monotony as the unfortunate civilians are dragged off one by one to their doom. Always there is anticipation of an impact that is seldom forthcoming.

Perhaps the very brilliance of Mr. Williams' portrayal of the complex, cynical and coldly intelligent antagonist of Montserrat ends by being harmful, since this enormously powerful British actor makes the sardonic soldier so compelling and interesting a figure that by comparison William Redfield's tortured young idealist seems pallid and ineffectual. The six victims are excellently played, with the oncoming Julie Harris and George Bartenieff being particularly moving as the two young people who encourage Montserrat in his resistance. But the play is provocative and thoughtful rather than emotionally shattering.

"Trial by Jury" & "H.M.S. Pinafore"

S. M. Chartock is presenting a series of Gilbert and Sullivan operettas. Except for the initial presentation space permits us to reproduce only four newspaper reviews of each presentation.



New York World-Telegram

OCTOBER 18, 1949

'Pinafore' And 'Trial' At Hellinger

By WILLIAM HAWKINS.

In the current production of "Pinafore" and "Trial by Jury," when the principals and the singing chorus all get together on one of Sullivan's sprightly tunes, the result is excellently lusty and bright.

Unfortunately that is just about all that can be said in favor of the production. It is languid, often inarticulate and reprehensibly acted. To assume that Gilbert and Sullivan opera can be done by people without humor or tempera-

ment is a great mistake. Frankly a good many high school performances have succeeded in recreating the luster of "Pinafore" with greater success than does this group.

In this day when we are all self consciously aware of social distinctions, there is pointed wit in Gilbert's ironic narrative about aristocracy in the British Navy. Nobody in the company appears to enjoy the satirical ease with which the lowly tar becomes captain of the ship, solely because of a revelation concerning his birth. Or perhaps the performers are dazed by the lack of enthusiasm for their previous efforts.

The Mark Hellinger Theater is not a happy home for this sort of show. The orchestra and the voices often sound swallowed up in the multitudinous reaches of the house. The fact that few of the actors articulate clearly does little to remedy this.

"Pinafore" has a good many spoken lines, and a number of clearly designed situations. They are acted with no fire and the tritest of gestures. Things really come to life only in ensemble numbers such as "Give Three Cheers," "His Eyes Should Flash" or "Let the Air With Joy Be

"TRIAL BY JURY" AND "H. M. S. PINAFORE"

Operas written by W. S. Gilbert; composed by Arthur Sullivan; staged by S. M. Chartock; scenery and lighting by Ralph Allsaw; costumes by Peggy Morrison; musical direction by Lehman Engel; presented by Mr. Chartock at the Mark Hellinger Theatre, October 17, 1949. The casts:

"Trial by Jury"
Usher.....Robert Eckles
Defendant.....Morton Bove
Judge.....Ralph Riggs
Counsel.....Earle MacVeigh
Barrister.....Howard Andriola
1st Bridesmaid...Joyce Carroll

2nd Bridesmaid....Marie Petek
3rd Bridesmaid....Natalie Green
Foreman of the Jury.....
Craig Timberlake
Plaintiff.....Elaïne Malbin

"H. M. S. Pinafore"

Little Buttercup...Jean Handalik
Tommy Tucker....Marie Petek
Bill Bobstay.....Robert Eckles
Dick Deadeye....Joseph Macaulay
Ralph Rackstraw...Morton Bove
Capt. Corcoran...Earle MacVeigh
Josephine.....Kathleen Roche
Sir Joseph Porter...Ralph Riggs
Cousin Hobe.....Beverly Janis
Bob Beckett...Craig Timberlake

Laden."

Earle MacVeigh, who is no great shakes as an actor, is virtually the only member of the cast who can be invariably understood. Joseph Macaulay is a reasonable if not inspired Dick Deadeye, and Jean Handalik, vocally rich and clear, is plainly in a prime which Buttercup had not known for many years.

As the admiral, Ralph Riggs is dressed and made up so he some-

how contrives to suggest Maggie Teys playing des Grieux in "Macon," though Miss Teys would not be caught dead with such mugging or muffled enunciation.

The curtain raiser, "Trial by Jury" is entirely musical, and if the plot is undistinguishable, it does not matter too much, for the noise is brave and gay.